

**STATEMENTS BY U.S. OFFICIALS AND INSTITUTIONS**  
**ON THE FACT THAT YPG IS PKK**

***April 28, 2016***

**US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter at the US Senate Armed Services Committee hearing “Counter ISIL Operations and Middle East Strategy”:**

In response to Senator Lindsey Graham’s (R-SC) question regarding the link between PYD/YPG with PKK:

**Senator Graham:** “...reports indicate that they (PYD/YPG) are aligned or at least have substantial ties with the PKK. Is that true?”

**Secretary Carter:** “Yes...”

***July 21, 2017***

**Commander of the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) General Raymond Thomas in his address to the Aspen Institute:**

“The one that I think is most discussed and most misunderstood is the evolution with our counterpart in Syria, the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces. Now, **interestingly they came about that name because at one point in time and I dealt with them directly**, I was in on the formal stage of the relationship with these guys. ***They formerly called themselves the YPG, who the Turks would say equated to the PKK*** who are dealing with the terrorist enemy mind, you know, how can you do that ally. ***So we literally played back to them that you've got to change your brand***, you know, what do you want to call yourself besides the YPG, and ***with about a day's notice they declared that they were the Syrian Democratic Forces***. I thought it was a stroke of brains to put democracy in there somewhere.”

***February 13, 2018***

**Daniel R. Coats, Director of National Intelligence, in his statement on the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community:**

***“The Kurdish People’s Protection Unit—the Syrian militia of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)—probably will seek some form of autonomy but will face resistance from Russia, Iran, and Turkey.”***

**March 23, 2018**

**Congressional Research Service report titled “Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations In Brief”**

“Turkish officials assert that their military operations in Syria are primarily for self-defense, *given links between the Syrian Kurdish YPG (People’s Protection Units) and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization).*”

**January 11, 2019**

**Senator Lindsey Graham’s Statement on Syria**

“There are millions of Kurds living in Turkey who are vibrant members of Turkish society, contributing to their economy, culture and democracy. But I have long contended that *there are elements among the Syrian Kurds that represent a legitimate national security threat to Turkey. Turkey’s concern regarding YPG elements must be addressed in a real way to ensure that Turkey’s borders are secure and are protected from any threats.* Any final disposition in Syria must address Turkey’s national security interests and concerns.”

**September 25, 2019**

**Syria Study Group final report**

**“Key Kurdish Groups:**

**PKK: KURDISTAN WORKERS’ PARTY**

- Founded in 1978. The United States designated the PKK as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in October 1997. It upheld the designation following a review in March 2019.

**PYD: DEMOCRATIC UNION PARTY**

- *The Syrian branch of the PKK*, founded in 2003.

**YPG: PEOPLE’S PROTECTION UNITS**

- Emerged in 2012 as the *military arm of the PYD*. The United States began cooperating with the YPG in late 2014.

**SDF: SYRIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES**

- Created in 2015 as the United States’ local partner in the war to defeat ISIS. *The SDF’s leadership is largely drawn from the YPG*, but it is a “multi-ethnic force comprising Kurds, Arabs, and other ethnic groups.” Primary command and control is held by *Kurdish elements.*”

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Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.